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CURRENT SUPPORT MEMORANDUM

RE-EQUIPMENT OF SOVIET TEXTILE INDUSTRY

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RE-EQUIPMENT OF SOVIET TEXTILE INDUSTRY

Re-equipment of the textile mills in the Soviet Union has been announced as an important objective in the Sixth Five Year Plan. 1/ The textile industry, along with other branches of the consumer goods industry, has been neglected by the Soviet government as a result of its continued emphasis on development of heavy industry. For instance, in 1954 cotton fabric production was 42 percent above that of 1940, but steel output increased two and a half times during the same period.

The new consideration being given the textile industry is seen in the investment figures of the five year plans. In light industry, where textiles comprise the major production, investment has substantially increased. The planned investment in light industry for the fourth five year plan (1946-1950) was 10.2 billion rubles, whereas for the current five year period, the original plan was 20 billion rubles. In 1953 Malenkov raised the planned investment goals substantially.

Nevertheless, Bulganin in his speech before the Central Committee of the CPSU in July, criticized the industry for its technical backwardness, its obsolete machinery in comparison with that of the United States, and for its failure to produce artificial fibers resembling silk and wool which in the West have found popular appeal. 2/ Output of cotton cloth is presently about 30 meters per capita, which approximates one half the 1951 per capita output in the United States. 3/

Recent official statements indicate that during the next five years the cotton industry will be supplied throughout with automatic looms--to date only 36 percent of the cotton looms are automatic. This constitutes a major re-equipment program since cotton comprises 84 percent of total textile production with wool, silk and linen making up the remaining 16 percent.

In the woolen and silk industries the new circular loom which has been developed by the USSR over a period of several years is scheduled for "wide application" during the Sixth Five Year Plan. This machine represents a new concept in loom design whereby the shuttles travel continuously in a circle instead of back and forth as in the conventional loom. In addition to modern looms, other automatic machinery is planned for fiber preparation and the finishing and dyeing processes. 4/

Inspection of recent models of textile machines shows that the USSR is producing machinery which compares favorably with US and British models in both style and efficiency of operation. This machinery production, however, has lagged and, in order to support their program of new construction and remodeling, the USSR is purchasing equipment abroad.

Soviet imports of textile machinery from the United Kingdom, contracted since the beginning of 1954, amount to more than \$7,000,000. 5/ In addition to this, the USSR last year arranged to purchase from Switzerland \$2,000,000 worth of machinery for use in textile plants. 6/ While this sum constitutes a fairly small expenditure in relation to total investment in light industry, it is significant that these are substantially the first textile machinery purchases from the West since 1950.

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Analyst:

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4. Tekstilnaya Promyshlennost, Nov 1955, p. 1, U
5. Department of Commerce, International Economic Analysis Division, Unpublished, 1955, U
6. Bern, Switzerland, State Despatch No. 812, 29 Apr 55, U

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